

Message Text

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SUBJ: GOG DEFENSE OF DRAFT CONSTITUTION

1. SUMMARY. MINISTER OF JUSTICE STEFANAKIS AND UNDER-MINISTER TO PM, LAMBRIAS, MADE MAJOR EFFORT IN PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 30 TO DEFLECT CRITICISM OF DRAFT CONSTITUTION BY POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND PRESS, BOTH FOREIGN AND GREEK. THEIR ARGUMENTS, HOWEVER, WERE FREQUENTLY PATERNALISTIC AND OPPOSITION PRESS DECEMBER 31 REMAINED HOSTILE WITH EXCEPTION OF LIBERAL TO VIMA WHICH VIEWED PRESS CONFERENCE AS PROMISING AMENDMENTS AND CONCESSIONS. GOG SPOKESMAN GAVE GROUND ONLY ON ISSUE OF LOWERING VOTE TO EIGHTEEN YEARS, WHICH STEFANAKIS SAID IS POSSIBILITY, AND IN PROMISING THAT ADMINISTRATIVE RIGHT OF DEPORTATION FOR POLITICAL REASON AND OF EXECUTIVE VETO WOULD BE USED SPARINGLY. END SUMMARY.

2. JUSTICE MINISTER STEFANAKIS AND UNDERMINISTER FOR PRESS RELATIONS LAMBRIAS GAVE GOG'S MOST DETAILED EXPLANATION TO DATE OF PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING DRAFT
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CONSTITUTION AT PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 30. THEIR

OPENING STATEMENTS AS WELL AS SUBSEQUENT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS WERE AIMED AT EDUCATING GREEK ELECTORATE ON GOG RATIONALE FOR ITS PROPOSED "REPUBLIC UNDER A PRESIDENT" AND, EQUALLY, AT OFFSETTING IMPACT OF VERY SHARP CRITICISMS FROM POLITICAL OPPOSITION. THE MINISTERS' STATEMENTS WERE READ IN DETAIL OVER RADIO AND TV.

3. ON OPPOSITION'S ALLEGATION THAT UNQUALIFIED PRESIDENTIAL VETO, WHICH REQUIRES TWO THIRDS TO OVERRID, IS EXCESSIVE, MINISTERS ARGUED THAT MOST FOREIGN CONSTITUTIONS PROVIDE FOR EXECUTIVE VETO, THAT EVEN PRESENT CRITICS HAD PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED PRINCIPLE OF VETO, AND THAT VETO WOULD BE USED LIGHTLY. THEY ALSO ASSERTED RIGHT TO APPOINT AND DISMISS PM AND CABINET IS STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR MANY OTHER GOVERNMENTS, IS A GREEK PRECEDENT FROM 1952 CONSTITUTION, AND IS QUALIFIED ADEQUATELY IN PRESENT DRAFT.

4. CONCERN OVER FOREIGN PRESS COMMENTARIES ON DRAFT WAS REGISTERED. LAMBRIAS SAID SOME JOURNALISTS HAD WRITTEN IN HASTE WITHOUT CAREFUL STUDY OF TEXTS. (NOTE: GOG HAS NOT PROVIDED DRAFT TEXT IN ANY FOREIGN LANGUAGE.) SPECIAL SENSITIVITY WAS SHOWN TO COMPARISONS OF DRAFT WITH CURRENT FRENCH CONSTITUTION; LAMBRIAS SAID; "SEVERAL PUBLICATIONS IN FOREIGN PRESS RESTRICTED THEMSELVES TO AN OFFHAND, UNFOUNDED AND MISLEADING CHARACTERIZATION: NAMELY, THAT THE GREEK CONSTITUTION UNDER DISCUSSION IS 'OF THE GAULLIST TYPE.'" STEFANAKIS ADDED THAT FRENCH PRESIDENT HAS "AUTONOMOUS LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY" AS RULE WHEREAS PROPOSED GREEK EXECUTIVE COULD INITIATE BILLS ONLY IN SPECIAL CASES; FRENCH PRESIDENT IS ELECTED THROUGH DIRECT VOTE WHEREAS GREEK MODEL AIMS AT INDIRECT ELECTION THROUGH PARLIAMENT IN ORDER TO LESSEN PARTISAN INFLUENCES UPON THE OFFICE: AND HE NOTED THAT THE GREEK PRESIDENT IS LIMITED VIS-A-VIS PARLIAMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH BOTH HIS REFERENDUM INITIATIVE AND HIS RIGHT TO PRESIDE OVER CABINET RESTRICTED TO EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES, UNLIKE FRANCE.

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5. TO VIMA, WHICH ON WHOLE HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTION, WAS REASSURED SOMEWHAT BY PRESS CONFIDENCE AND HEADLINED THAT GOVERNMENT PROMISED AMENDMENTS REGARDING RIGHT TO STRIKE, POLITICAL DEPORTATION, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES, BUT "WILL REMAIN IMMOVABLE AS REGARDS PREROGATIVES OF PRESIDENT." OTHER CRITICAL PAPERS, AVGHI, RIZOSPASTIS, MELLON WERE

UNCONVINCED AND ACCUSED GOG RESPECTIVELY OF COSMETIC,
DECEPTIVE, AND EXPEDIENT TACTIC IN PRESS CONFERENCE.
THE LEFTIST PRESS CONTINUES TO BE MOST UPSET OVER
ARTICLE ELEVEN WHICH PERMITS GOVERNMENT UNILATERALLY TO
DECLARE STRIKES POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND THUS ILLEGAL.
AKROPOLIS ECHOED THE OFFICIAL LINE: "GOVERNMENT WILL
ACCEPT CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS."
KUBISCH

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